

WHAT IS OF OBLIGATION
FOR A CATHOLIC TO BELIEVE
CONCERNING
THE INSPIRATION OF THE CANONICAL SCRIPTURES,
BEING A POSTSCRIPT
TO AN ARTICLE IN THE FEBRUARY No. OF THE
"NINETEENTH CENTURY REVIEW,"
IN ANSWER TO PROFESSOR HEALY.
BY
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NOTICE.

In the February Number of the *Nineteenth Century*, an article of mine appeared, which has elicited a criticism from a Catholic Professor of name. As I acquiesce neither in his statements nor in his reasonings, I am led to put on paper a Postscript in answer to him; and that without availing myself of the offer made to me by the Editor of the Review to re-publish, together with this Postscript, my Article itself: an indulgence beyond its rules, which I feel I have no right to accept, unless the Article shall be expressly called for by the public.

At present, in order to make this Postscript intelligible to those who have not seen my original Article, it is sufficient, I conceive, to say that it aims, as that Article did, at answering the question proposed in my title-page: "What is of obligation for a Catholic to believe concerning the

Inspiration of the Canonical Scriptures.” This being the sole question, I observed, that, since two Ecumenical Councils have spoken upon Inspiration, it is obvious to have recourse to them, if we would learn what is *de fide* or obligatory on our faith in the matter. To this, of course, must be added any teaching which comes to us incidentally from the ordinary *magisterium* of the Church, or from the joint testimony of the Fathers; but the two Councils, the Tridentine and the Vatican, give us by far the most distinct and definite information.

These two Councils decide that the Scriptures are inspired, and inspired throughout, but not inspired by an immediately divine act, but through the instrumentality of inspired men; that they are inspired in all matters of faith and morals, meaning thereby, not only theological doctrine, but also the historical and prophetic narratives which they contain, from Genesis to the Acts of the Apostles; and lastly, that, being inspired because written by inspired men, they have a human side, which manifests itself in language, style, tone of thought, character, intellectual peculiarities, and such infirmities, not sinful, as belong to our nature, and which in unimportant matters may issue in what in doctrinal

definitions is called an *obiter dictum*. At the same time, the gift of inspiration being divine, a Catholic must never forget that what he is handling is in a true sense the Word of God, which, as I said in my Article, “by reason of the difficulty of always drawing the line between what is human and what is divine, cannot be put on the level with other books, as it is now the fashion to do, but has the nature of a Sacrament, which is outward and inward, and a channel of supernatural grace.”

This is why the second great definition of the Councils, on which I proceeded in my Article to insist, is so important, viz., that “the authoritative interpretation of Scripture rests with the Church.”

So much on the view of Scripture which offends Professor Healy, to whose criticisms in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* I now make my answer.

POSTSCRIPT.

A not over-courteous, nor over-exact writer, in his criticisms on my Essay on Inspiration, gives it as his judgment upon it, that "its startling character" must be evident to "the merest tyro in the schools of Catholic Theology." 'Tis a pity he did not take more than a short month for reading, pondering, writing, and printing. Had he not been in a hurry to publish, he would have made a better Article. I took above a twelve-month for mine. Thus I account for some of the Professor's unnecessary remarks.

If I understand him, his main *thesis* is this, that, virtually or actually, Scripture is inspired, not only in matters of faith and morals, as is declared in the Councils of Trent and of the Vatican, but in all respects, and for all purposes, and on all subjects; so that no clause all through the Bible is open to the charge of error of any kind, and that no good Catholic can think otherwise. If this is his position, it is plain that I approach the question on quite a distinct side from his; but I do not see that personally and practically I have very much to differ from him in, except in his faulty logic, and his misrepresentations of what I have written.

§ 1.

Divine Inspiration of Scripture in all matters of Faith and Morals.

This proposition must be accepted as *de fide* or of obligatory faith, by every Catholic, as having been so defined by the Councils of Trent and of the Vatican.

Now I say first, that the inspiration of religious and moral truth, of which these Councils speak, is a divine gift, in the first instance given to divine ministers, and from them carried on, as into their oral teachings, so also into such of their writings as the Church has declared to be sacred and canonical.

And next: divine gifts, as we read of them in the history of Revelation, did not extend in every case to all departments of ministration, but had in each instance a particular service and application. These various favours were ordinarily but partial, given for precise and definite purposes; so that it is but in harmony with the rule of Providence in parallel cases, if there should be found, in respect to Biblical Inspiration, a distribution and a limitation in the bestowal of it. St. Paul's account of the *gratiæ gratis datæ*, may be taken to illustrate this principle, without my meaning at all thereby to imply that the inspiration of an Evangelist was not in its intensity, refinement, abundance, and manifoldness, far superior to the gifts spoken of by the Apostle in the chapter to which I refer. I refer to that chapter in order to draw attention to what was the rule of Providence at the first in the disposal and direction of the *gratiæ gratis datæ*, viz., that they had a special scope and character, and, in consequence, as is intimated in the parable of the Five and Ten Talents, were limited in their range of operation. I am not here affirming or denying that Scripture is inspired in matters of astronomy and chronology, as well as in faith and morals; but I certainly do not see that because Inspiration is given for the latter subjects, therefore it extends to the former.

The Apostle tells us that, whereas there are "*diversities of grace*," there is "*the same Spirit*"; and that "*the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit*"; that is, the gift is given according to the measure of the need. Then he says,

“To one by the Spirit is given the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge according to the same Spirit.” To both of them there was given “the Word” of God; but one was the minister of the Word as far as Wisdom went, and the other as far as Knowledge went; and, though the same man might indeed have both gifts, we could not logically argue that he had wisdom on the mere ground of his having knowledge.

It may be observed too that it was by information from those who thus had “the Word” of God that St. Luke wrote his Gospel; for he says expressly that the things which he recorded “were delivered to us” by those “who from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and servants of the *Word*”; that is, those who saw, or who were inspired to know, what the Evangelist reported from them: a statement which would imply that their particular gift was that of bearing faithful witness, or otherwise being endowed with the gift of knowledge. As another instance of the limitation of a gift, I may refer to the history of Jonas. “The Word of the Lord” came to him to denounce judgment against Nineve; but he did not know that the divine menace was conditional. Again, Eliseus says to Giezi, “Was not my *heart present* when the man turned back to meet thee?” yet, when the Sunamitess had “caught hold on his feet,” he had said, “Her soul is in anguish, and the Lord hath hid it from me and hath not told me.”

I return to St. Paul: he continues, “To another, Faith in the same Spirit; to another, the grace of healing in one Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy,” and so on. He ends a long chapter on the subject by enumerating the offices which needed and determined the gifts:—“Apostles, Prophets, Doctors,” and the rest; and by intimating that, as not all are Apostles or Prophets, so the gifts, necessary to these, were not

given to others. This is from 1 Cor. xii. The 4th Chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians is on the same subject.

I should infer from this, that those who were chosen by the Spirit to minister between God and man, such as Moses, Samuel, Elias, Isaias, the Apostles and Evangelists, would be invested with the high gifts necessary for their work, and not necessarily with other gifts.

I do not, then, feel it any difficulty when I am told by the infallible voice of more than one Ecumenical Council, that the writers of Scripture, whether under the New Covenant or the Old, ethical and religious writers, have had assigned to them a gift and promise in teaching which is in keeping with this antecedent idea which we form of the work of Evangelists and Prophets. If they are to teach us our duty to God and man, it is natural that inspiration should be promised them in matters of faith and morals; and if such is the actual promise, it is natural that Councils should insist upon its being such;—but how otherwise are we to account for the remarkable stress laid on the inspiration of Scripture in matters of faith and morals, both in the Vatican and at Trent, if after all faith and morals, in view of inspiration, are only parts of a larger gift? Why was it not simply said once for all that in all matters of faith or fact, not only in all its parts, but on every subject whatever, Scripture was inspired? If nothing short of the highest and exactest truth on all subjects must be contemplated as the gift conveyed to the inspired writers, what is gained by singling out faith and morals as the legitimate province of Inspiration, and thereby throwing the wider and more complete view of Scripture truth into the shade? Why, on the contrary, does the Vatican Council so carefully repeat the very wording of the Tridentine in its statements about inspiration in faith and morals, putting no other subject matter

on a level with them? It may perhaps be said that it is a rule with Councils, that the later repeat the very words of the earlier; true, the Holy Trinity, the Creation, the Incarnation, the Blessed Virgin's prerogatives, are often expressed in language carrying on a tradition of terms as well as truths; but this is done because the truths or words are important. It is a paradox to say that the Vatican declarations about Scripture are in their wording so much of a *fac simile* of the Tridentine, only because they mean so very little. Even when a phrase is not easy to translate, the identity is preserved; for instance, the clause "in rebus fidei et morum, ad ædificationem doctrinæ Christianæ pertinentium," not "pertinentibus," is found in both Councils.

This is the obvious aspect under which I first view the inspiration of Scripture, as determined by the Councils.

§ 2

Inspiration in matters of Historical Fact.

Here we are brought to a second and most important question. When I say that the writers of Scripture were divinely inspired in all matters of faith and morals, what matters are included in the range of such inspiration? Are historical statements of fact included? It makes me smile to think that any one could fancy me so absurd as to exclude them, especially since in a long passage in my Essay I have expressly included them; but the Professor has done his best so to manage my text, as to make his readers believe that the Bible, as far as it is historical, does not in my view proceed from inspired writers. Professing to quote me, he omits just the very passage in which I have distinctly avowed the inspiration of the whole of its history. This is so strange, so anomalous a proceeding, as to make it difficult to believe that the same person who had the good feeling to write the first page of the Review wrote those which follow.

I am obliged to take notice of this great impropriety in pure self-defence; for if I am not able to show that the writer has ill-treated me, he will have an argument against me stronger than any which by fair means he is able to produce. On the other hand, if I show that he has been guilty of an indefensible act, third parties will not be so ready to think him a safe guide in other judgments which he makes to my discredit.

To begin, then: in § 13 of my Essay, pp. 5, 6, I write thus: "While the Councils, as has been shown, lay down so emphatically the inspiration of Scripture in respect to faith and morals, it is remarkable that they do not say a word directly as to its inspiration in matters of fact. Yet are we therefore to conclude that the record of facts in Scripture does not come under the guarantee of its inspiration? *we are not so to conclude.*"

These are my words, as they stand; but he quotes them thus: "[The Cardinal] asserts that, while the Councils, as has been shown, lay down so emphatically the inspiration of Scripture in respect to faith and morals, it is remarkable that they do not say a word directly as to its inspiration in matters of fact," p. 139; *and there he stops*: he quotes neither my question nor my answer which follow, my question being,

Qu.: "Are we therefore to conclude that the record of facts in Scripture does not come under the guarantee of its inspiration?"

and my answer being,

Answ.: "We are not so to conclude, and for this plain reason," &c., &c.

With such notions of a critic's duty, much less does the Professor think it necessary to quote, or, I suppose, even to read, the twenty lines on behalf of the inspiration of the Bible history which follow thus:

“For this plain reason — the sacred narrative, carried on through so many ages, what is it but the very matter for our faith and rule of our obedience? What but that narrative itself is the supernatural teaching, in order to which inspiration is given? What is the whole history, traced out in Scripture from Genesis to Esdras, and thence on to the end of the Acts of the Apostles, but a manifestation of Divine Providence, on the one hand interpretative, on a large scale and with analogical applications, of universal history, and on the other preparatory, typical and predictive, of the Evangelical Dispensation? Its pages breathe of providence and grace, of our Lord, and of His work and teaching, from beginning to end. It views facts in those relations in which neither ancients, such as the Greek and Latin classical historians, nor moderns, such as Niebuhr, Grote, Ewald, or Michelet, can view them. In this point of view it has God for its author, even though the finger of God traced no words but the Decalogue. Such is the claim of Bible history in its substantial fulness to be accepted *de fide* as true. *In this point of view, Scripture is inspired, not only in faith and morals, but in all its parts which bear on faith, including matters of fact.*”

All this he leaves out.

If a finish was wanting to this specimen of sharp practice, he has taken care to supply it. For, after cutting off my own statement at its third line, as I have shown, he substitutes, as if mine, a statement of his own, which he attributes to me, about *obiter dicta*, adding the words, “*Hence* he [the Cardinal] raises the question,” which I do not raise till eight pages later, and not “*hence*” even then. And next, whereas *obiter dicta* are according to him in their very nature exceptions to a rule, viz., the rule that Scripture statements of fact are inspired, he is obliged for the moment to imply that I do maintain the rule, in order that he may be able to impute to me, in cases of *obiter dicta*, a breach of it.

Obiter Dicta viewed relatively to Inspiration.

The subject which naturally comes next to be considered is that of the possible presence of *obiter dicta* in inspired Scripture; by *obiter dicta* being meant phrases, clauses, or sentences in Scripture about matters of mere fact, which, as not relating to faith and morals, may without violence be referred to the human element in its composition

Here, however, I observe with satisfaction that the Professor so far does me justice as to allow that what I have conceded, or have proposed to concede, to the scientific or literary inquirer, is not inconsistent with what the Church pronounces to be obligatory *de fide* on the Catholic. He says, "while the Church is silent, we of course do not dare to censure these views, but neither do we dare to hold them." This being the case, I shall, in the interest of the untheological student, under correction of the Church, continue as I have begun, to treat my subject as a question open to argument.

1. Now I observe, first, that any statement about the inspiration of Scripture is far too serious a matter in its bearings to be treated carelessly; and consequently the Professor explains, while he complains of, my "raising the question" of *obiter dicta* "and not answering it." Of course; I do not go further in my Essay than saying, "There does not seem any serious difficulty in admitting" that they are to be found in Scripture. Why is not that enough for a cautious man to say? The decision of the point does not rest with me; but still I may have an opinion as long as there is no decision.

2. And next, why does he always associate an *obiter dictum* with the notion of error, or, even as he sometimes expresses himself,

with "*falsehood*"? At least what right has he to attribute such an association to me? I have implied no such thing. I very much doubt whether I have once used the word "error" in connection with the phrase "*obiter dictum*," though (as I shall show directly) no harm follows if I have. I have given my own sense of the word when I parallel it to such instances of it as occur in a question of dogma. Does the Professor mean to say that such a *dictum* is necessarily false when it occurs in a dogmatic document? No—it is merely unauthoritative. Mind, I am not arguing that such an unauthoritative *dictum* is possible in a matter of inspired Scripture on the ground that it is possible in a matter of dogma; but I am showing by a parallel case what my own meaning of the word is.

Obiter dictum means, as I understand it, a phrase or sentence which, whether a statement of literal fact or not, is not from the circumstances binding on our faith. The force of the "*obiter*" is negative, not positive. To say, "I do not accept a statement as a literal fact," is not all one with saying that it is *not* a fact; I can *not hold* without *holding not*. The very comfort of an *obiter dictum* to the Catholic, whether in his relation to infallibility or to inspiration, whether in dogma or in Scripture, is, that it enables him in controversy to pass by a difficulty, which else may be pressed on him without his having the learning perhaps, or the knowledge, or the talent to answer it; that it enables him to profess neither Yes nor No in questions which are beyond him, and on which nothing depends. In difficult questions it leaves the Catholic student in peace. And, if the Professor asks, as I understand him to do, who shall decide what is important and what is not, I answer at once, the Church, which, though he seems to forget it, claims the supreme interpretation of Scripture according to the force of that second dogma about the written Word which was defined both at Trent and the Vatican.

It is plain then, as an *obiter dictum*, in my understanding of it, does not oblige us to affirm or to deny its literal sense, neither does it prohibit us from passing over the literal sense altogether, and, if we prefer, from taking some second, third, or fourth interpretation of the many which are possible, (provided the Church does not forbid,) as I shall show from St. Thomas presently.

3. And now take one of the instances with which Scripture may be said to provide us. St. Paul speaks of "the cloak which he left at Troas with Carpus." Would St. Timothy, to whom he wrote, think this an infallible utterance? And supposing it had been discovered, on most plausible evidence, that the Apostle left his cloak with Eutychus, not with Carpus, would Timothy, would Catholics now, make themselves unhappy, because St. Paul had committed what the Professor calls "a falsehood"? Would Christians declare that they had no longer any confidence in Paul after he had so clearly shown that he "had" *not* "the Spirit of God"? Would they feel that he had put the whole Apostolic system into confusion, and by mistaking Eutychus for Carpus he had deprived them henceforth of reading with any comfort his Epistle to the Romans or to the Ephesians?

I fear seeming to use light words on a sacred subject; but I must ask, is St. Paul's request to Timothy about his *penula* "the Word"? is it more than an apparent exception, in the text of his Epistle, to the continuity of the Divine Inspiration? And was not that continuity still without any break at all in St. Paul, if we consider Inspiration as a supernatural habit? May I ask an urgent, important question without profaneness? Could St. Paul say, "Thus saith the Lord, Send the penula, &c., &c."? I do not deny, however, that in a certain case he could so speak; but are we driven to that hypothesis here?

Theology has its prerogatives and rights; but its very perfection as a science causes theologians to be somewhat wanting in tenderness to concrete humanity, to those lay Catholics who in their grasp of religious truth do not go much beyond the catechism, and who, without entering into the expedients which system demands, wish to preserve their obedience to Holy Church.

4. Let us see, however, whether St. Thomas, the greatest of theologians, will not accompany at least my first step in this question.

In his *Summa*, i., qu. 102, he takes for granted the Inspiration of Scripture, and its truthfulness as the consequence of that inspiration; for where truth is not an effect, inspiration is not a cause. And he inquires what statements of fact in Scripture are to be taken as true literally, and what are not; and, in answer to the question, he lays down, as a rule or test, decisive of the point, this circumstance, viz., whether the *manner* or *bearing* of the sacred writer is historical or not. This being kept in mind, let us consider his words:—

“In omnibus quæ *sic* [per modum narrationis historicæ] Scriptura tradit, est pro fundamento tenenda veritas historiæ”; that is, “In all matters which Scripture delivers after the manner of historical narrative, we must hold, as a fundamental fact, the truth of the history.”

Now observe what follows from this. In giving a *rule* or *test* of the *truth* of historical statements, he surely implies that there are, or at least that there may be, statements which do *not* embody, which do not profess to embody, historical truth. If, in a military gathering or review, I were told, “You may know the English by their red coats,” would not this imply that there were troops on the ground who were *not* English and *not* in red? And in like

manner, when St. Thomas says that the test of historical truth is the inspired penman's writing in the historical style, he certainly implies that there are, or might be, statements of fact, which in their literal sense come short of the historic style and of historic truth, or what I should call *obiter dicta*. I repeat, *obiter dicta* are but "unhistoric statements." So far I consider I speak with the sanction of St. Thomas; now let me go on to say what I hold without (as I fear) his sanction.

5. I feel very diffident of my ability to speak with ever so much restraint of the words of St. Thomas; but, if I am forced to speak, certainly he seems to me not only to hold as literal truth that "*Paradisus est locus corporeus*," which is the matter before him, but to see little difficulty, supposing (which of course he does not grant) that the literal sense was not historic, or was doubtful, in interpreting the whole account spiritually or even figuratively. Therefore, if the case occurred of small inaccuracies of fact in Scripture history, instead of countenancing me in saying that, in matters which did not infringe upon faith and morals, such apparent error was of no serious consequence, I grant that he would have preferred, (and with St. Augustine,) to interpret a passage, so characterised, in a spiritual sense, or according to some other secondary sense, which he thinks it possible to give to Scripture. Here it is, I grant, that I should not have his countenance; he would not indeed forbid me to say that a statement was *literally* inaccurate, but he would rather wish me to find some interpretation for it, which would give it an edifying sense. Thus St. Augustine, when questioned as to Jacob's conduct towards his father and brother, appeals from that grave question to its typical and evangelical meaning: "*Non est mendacium, sed mysterium.*"

What makes me so conclude is a passage in his *Quæst. iii de Potentia*. He there speaks of the danger, "*ne aliquis ita*

Scripturam ad unum sensum cogere velit, quod alios sensus, qui in se veritatem continent, et possunt, salvâ circumstantia litteræ, Scripturæ aptari, penitus excludantur." Then he says that the dignity of Scripture requires many senses under one letter. He concludes by saying, "Omnis veritas, quæ, salvâ litteræ circumstantia, potest divinæ Scripturæ aptari, *est ejus sensus.*"

§ 4

Restrictions upon Inspiration.

St. Augustine and St. Thomas are such great names in the Church that he must be a bold Catholic, who, knowing what they are, should contradict them. But they cannot rightly be taken instead of the Church. There are numbers of good Catholics who never heard of them, and many of these learned and accomplished in their respective ways and callings, and earnestly desirous to remain in the faith and fear of Holy Church. And, as I would not dare to treat the above-mentioned Fathers with disrespect, much less should I dare to speak against the teaching of the Church herself; and when the Church has distinctly taught us in two Ecumenical Councils, once and again, at the interval of three hundred years, and in very different conditions of human society, that the divine inspiration of Scripture is to be assigned especially *rebus fidei et morum*, it shocks me to find a Catholic Professor asserting that such a dogmatic decision is what he calls a *restriction*; a charge as inconsistent with good logic as with tenderness towards a decision of the Church. Of course I have no intention of complaining of his adding to the Church's decision the conclusions of theology or the anticipations of devotion, but her person (if I may so speak of the Church) is sacred; and she has reasons for all she does, and all she does not do. We should never forget who is minister and who is Lord.

So much for (what I fear I must call) the impropriety of the word "restriction" when applied to a literal quotation of mine from the definitions of two Ecumenical Councils. Now for its failure in logic.

The Professor affirms, speaking (as I understand him) of the "clause" in *rebus fidei et morum*, that it is "a restricting clause," and that "the Catholic dogma is adequately and accurately expressed only by *eliminating* that clause." Eliminating! He cannot be using so great a word with reference to any mere statement of mine; it fits on to nothing short of the dogmatic utterances of the two Ecumenical Councils. He has said nothing in order to guard against this natural conclusion, and as if to make it the clearer, he contrasts it with my own words, to the effect that "sacred Scripture is inspired *throughout*."

But I would observe that, easy as it is to speak against "restrictions" being placed on the gift of inspiration, those who would impute the blame, whether to the Church or to me, are also incurring it themselves. For instance, if Scripture is the Word of God (as in a true sense it is), and inspiration is (in the Professor's sense) *throughout* it, it cannot but be *verbally* inspired; but the prevalent opinion now is that this is not the case. How is this not putting a restriction upon inspiration? How is it *thorough*, if the *language* of Scripture is not included in it? Yet the Professor, who is so disturbed at my appealing to the dogmatic force of "*fides et mores*," has no scruple whatever in depriving inspiration of its action upon the language of the writers of Scripture. He ventures to say, in spite of the dissent of great Fathers, that "God in most cases *did* leave the choice of the words to the writer"; and he speaks of the opinion, that the Holy Spirit dictated the sacred books word for word, as having been "held by a few, and now generally and justly rejected."

Thus he speaks. It seems that he may do *without* Ecumenical Councils what another may not do *with* them.

Nor is this the only "restriction" which he allows upon the inspiration of Scripture. He does not quite commit himself to it as an opinion, but he does not quarrel with those who hold it, viz., that inspiration goes as far as, but not further than, the "*res et sententias*" of Scripture, beyond which the inspiration does not reach; he calls for no "eliminating" process here.

But something more has to be said still on the Professor's mode of arguing. Nothing is more difficult in controversy than the skilful use of metaphors. A metaphor has a dozen aspects, and, unless we look sharp, we shall be slain by the rebound of one or other of our deductions from them. Now if there be an idea intimately connected or present to us when we speak of a "*word*," it is that of a personal agent, from whom the word proceeds. It is an effect which does not exist without a cause. It must have a speaker or writer, and but one such. Here one effect cannot have two causes. If two are ascribed to it, one or other must be ascribed metaphorically. We cannot refer it to each of two causes at one time in its full sense. But the Professor takes it in its highest sense, as the Word of God, when he would prove that Scripture had no imperfection in it; yet when he would relieve himself of the difficulties, and account for defects, of language, then it is the word of man. Of course the inspiration of Scripture is from above; but what I want to be told is, are we to consider a book of Scripture, written or spoken, literally the Word of God or literally the word of man?

§ 5.

Plenary and Permanent Inspiration.

But it may be objected, in answer to what I have been saying in explanation of "restriction," that the Council of the Vatican,

treating of inspiration, has added to the dogma of Trent a clause which destroys the distinction which I have been making as to the special object with reference to which the sacred writers were endowed with the gift. For the Vatican Council has dogmatically determined the books of holy Scripture, "*libros integros cum omnibus suis partibus, inspiratos esse*"; and if the whole of Scripture in all its parts is inspired, how can inspiration be restricted to the matters of faith and morals? Yet I conceive this difficulty admits of an easy reply.

Certainly I have no wish to explain away the words of the Council; but is there no distinction between a gift itself, and the purpose for which it was made and the use to which it is to be applied? We meet with the distinction every day. Might not a benefactor leave a legacy to the whole of a large family of children, one and all, yet under the condition that it was expended solely on their education? And so Scripture is inspired in its length and breadth, and is brought into the compass of one volume by virtue of this supernatural bond; whenever, wherever, and by whomsoever written, it is all inspired: still we may ask the question, In what respect, and for what purpose?

When we speak of the Bible in its length and breadth, we speak of it quantitatively; but this does not interfere with our viewing it in relation to the character, or what may be called the quality, of the inspiration. According to the two Councils, Scripture is inspired as being the work of inspired men, the subject of faith and morals being the occupation or mission assigned to them and their writings, and inspiration being the efficient cause of their teaching.

Each of these truths is independent of, is consistent with, each. The plenary extent of inspiration, and the definite object of it, neither of these can interfere, neither can be confused, with

the other: Because a cup is full, that does not enable us to determine what is the nature and the effects of a liquor with which it is filled; whether, for instance, it is nutritive or medicinal or merely refreshing; and so, though Scripture be plenarily inspired, it is a question still, for what purposes.

In a word, Inspiration of Scripture in omnibus *partibus* is one thing; in omnibus *rebus* is another.

It may be asked how inspiration could be given to the sacred writers for faith and morals, whereas they were not always writing, and, when they did write, needed not be writing on religious and ethical subjects. Thus St. Paul, when he wrote about his *penula*, was he not in possession of a divine gift which on that occasion he could not use? But we see instances of this every day. A man may be strong without opportunity of using his strength, and a man may have a good memory or be a good linguist though he exercises his gift only now and then; and so a passage of Scripture may have spiritual meanings, as St. Thomas would hold, and may avail for edification with a force which an uninspired writing has not, though the literal sense may refer to matters purely secular and human, as the passage in John ii, 10, which I have quoted in my Article.

§ 6

Inspiration as Co-ordinate with Error.

There is one subject more, on which it may be expedient to dwell for a few minutes.

The Professor insists on its being a conclusion theologically certain that everything that is to be found in the Sacred Writers is literally the Word of God; and in consequence he would imply

that I, by questioning whether some words in Scripture may not come from the writers themselves mainly, have committed the serious act of rejecting a theological truth. Now, of course it is indisputable that a proposition, which is the immediate consequence of a truth of Revelation, is itself a certain truth. Certainly; but it is a further question whether this or that conclusion is an instance of such a real demonstration. This indeed I say frankly, that, if my certainties depended on the Professor's syllogisms, I should have small chance of making a decent show of theological certainties.

For instance, in the present question, he has proved just the contrary to what he meant to prove, as can easily be shown. He had to prove that it is theologically certain that the whole of Scripture, whatever is contained in it, is the Word of God, and this is how he does it. He says, "It is as absurd to say that a man could commit sin under the *impulse* of the Holy Ghost, as to say that the Sacred Writers could write error under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost." Why does he change "impulse" into "inspiration" in the second clause of his sentence? Who ever fancied that the *impulse* of the Holy Spirit might cause error? Who will deny that the impulse of the Holy Spirit would certainly be accorded to an Apostle or Prophet to hinder, even in a statement of fact, any serious error? If the Holy Spirit does not hinder varieties and errors in transcribers of Scripture which damage the perfection of His work, why should He hinder small errors (on the hypothesis that such there are) of the original writers? Is not He, with the Church co-operating, sufficient for a guardian?

But this is not all. He says that error cannot co-exist with inspiration, more than sin with grace; but grace *can* co-exist with sin. His parallel just turns against him. Good Christians are

each "the Temple of God," "partakers of the Divine Nature," nay "gods," and they are said "portare Deum in corpore suo"; and priests, I consider, have not less holiness than others; yet every priest in his daily Mass asks pardon "pro innumerabilibus peccatis et offensionibus et negligentis meis." Grace brings a soul nearer to God than inspiration, for Balaam and Caiphas were inspired; yet the Professor tells us that, though sin is possible in spite of grace, error is impossible because of inspiration. I have not dared to speak against any decision of the great doctors St. Augustine and St. Thomas, but I feel it sad indeed that from a Professor of a School of Theology, so widely known and so time-honoured, they should sustain the indignity of so unsatisfactory an advocacy, and that too directed against one whose ecclesiastical station might have advantageously suggested criticism in a milder tone.

Thus I answer the special remarks made by Professor Healy on my February Article; should other objections be urged against it, I trust they would be found to admit of as direct an explanation.

J. H. N.

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